

Message Text

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46

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 PM-09 L-03 AID-20 IGA-02 SS-15

MC-02 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 EB-11 OMB-01

TRSE-00 RSR-01 /119 W

----- 016664

R 091115 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1445

INFO SECDEF WASHDC ASD// SA// DSAA

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY/ ECJG- PA

CNO OPS 63 WASHDC

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENGLAND

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1931

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS TS

SUBJ: LOAN OF TWO SHIPS TO TUNISIA

REF: (A) USCINCEUR MSG DTG 041751 Z APR 73 (NOTAL)

(B) USLOT MSG DTG 090955 Z MAR 73

(C) TUNIS 0867

1. AS DEPARTMENT KNOWS, MINISTER OF DEFENSE (MOD) FARHAT HAS STRESSED TO ME THAT GOT GIVING HIGH PRIORITY TO THE EXPANSION AND MODERNIZATION OF NAVAL FORCES AND HAS MADE APPEAL FOR USG ASSISTANCE WITH LOAN OF SHIPS. TUNISIAN CNO JEDIDI HAS ALSO EMPHASIZED TO US IMPORTANCE OF SHIP LOAN. MOD SECRETARY GENERAL BALLY AGAIN STRESSED THIS NEED IN MEETING WITH CHUSLOT ON APRIL 1.

2. CHUSLOT HAS ALREADY SET FORTH COGENT ARGUMENTS IN HIS MESSAGE (REFTEL B) SUPPORTING SUCH A SHIP LOAN. I CONCURRED IN THAT MESSAGE AND I NOW UNDERSTAND THAT CNO IS CONSIDERING MATTER OF LOAN OF TWO PG, ASHEVILLE CLASS, SHIPS TO THE TUNISIAN NAVY. I WOULD LIKE AT THIS TIME TO REPEAT MY STRONG ENDORSEMENT FOR FOLLOWING REASONS:
A. GOT NEEDS ADDITIONAL SHIPS TO ENSURE ADEQUATE
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PROTECTION FOR 1500 KMS OF COASTLINE. MOD IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT PROTECTING OFF- SHORE (OIL) INSTALLATIONS IN SOUTH AND CONTROLLING SEA TRAFFIC FROM LIBYA. TWO ASHEVILLE CLASS SHIPS WILL MATERIALLY ENHANCE TUNISIAN NAVY CAPABILITY TO PERFORM THESE ESSENTIAL COASTAL PATROL MISSIONS. AT PRESENT, SMALL TUNISIAN NAVY (TOTAL 13 SHIPS) HAS ONLY TWO PATROL SHIPS WITH LIMITED ALL WEATHER CAPABILITY AND SPEED TO ACCOMPLISH MULTITUDE OF CIVIL AND MILITARY MISSIONS. TWO ASHEVILLE CLASS SHIPS WOULD GIVE TUNISIAN NAVY FIRST EFFECTIVE ALL WEATHER COASTAL PATROL CAPABILITY.

B. LOAN ASPECT OF TRANSACTION IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE GOT IS UNABLE TO PURCHASE DESIRED SHIPS UNLESS DEFENSE BUDGET IS GREATLY INCREASED WITH FUNDS DIVERTED FROM ESSENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. SUCH A DIVERSION WOULD BE HIGHLY UNDESIRABLE. FRENCH ARE ASSISTING WITH ONE NEW PG (PLUS ONE OLD USN MINESWEEPER) VESSEL TO BE DELIVERED IN 1974. FRENCH NAVAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, HOWEVER, IS IN ITSELF NOT SUFFICIENT TO MEET INCREASED TUNISIAN NEEDS.

C. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HAS PUT MAJOR STRESS ON OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA. LOAN OF TWO SHIPS WOULD REASSURE GOT OF OUR CONTINUED INTEREST IN ITS SECURITY AND WOULD DO MUCH TO OFFSET REDUCTIONS IN GRANT AID, AS WELL AS EASING TRANSITION TO FULL FMS CREDIT MAP PROGRAM IN FY 76. IN THE PAST WE HAVE CONCENTRATED OUR MAP RESOURCES ON ARMY AND AIR FORCE AND LEFT IT TO THE FRENCH TO MEET TUNISIAN NAVAL REQUIREMENTS. OWING TO THE GROWING LIMITATIONS ON US MAP FUNDS, WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO SHOW FLEXIBILITY AND RESPOND WITH ASSISTANCE WHERE POSSIBLE, SUCH AS IN THE LOAN OF TWO SHIPS.

3. WE COULD PRESENT THIS LOAN TO TUNISIANS AS A ONE TIME TRANSFER IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY FOLLOW- ON REQUIREMENT FOR NAVAL ASSISTANCE. GOT HAS ALREADY INDICATED TO US THAT IT IS WILLING TO PAY REHABILITATION, TRANSPORT AND MAINTENANCE COSTS FOR THESE SHIPS, SINCE NAVY BUDGET BEING INCREASED SOMEWHAT THIS CALENDAR YEAR. THIS WILLINGNESS IS A MAJOR STEP TOWARD SELF- SUFFICIENCY. WE DO NOT FORESEE THAT THE PROJECT WILL DRAW FROM OTHER DEVELOPMENT PLANS DESCRIBED IN REFTEL C.

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4. IN SUM, I BELIEVE THAT THIS LOAN PRESENTS A UNIQUE

OPPORTUNITY, AT MINIMUM COST, TO FURTHER OUR POLITICAL INTERESTS IN TUNISIA AND TO SUPPORT OUR STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN MEDITERRANEAN. BOURGUIBA AND GOT WOULD REGARD LOAN AS IMPORTANT GESTURE DEMONSTRATING CONTINUING US INTEREST IN TUNISIAN SECURITY, WHICH WOULD CLEARLY EASE OUR TASK IN EXPLAINING NEED FOR REDUCING US ASSISTANCE LEVELS IN OTHER FIELDS. AT SAME TIME WE COULD FURTHER STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF 6 TH FLEET THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASED INTELLIGENCE EXCHANGE, CONTINUING PORT VISITS, AND LEVERAGE FOR CONTINUING USE OF TUNISIAN FACILITIES.

5. I HOPE DEPARTMENT WILL STRONGLY AND ACTIVELY SUPPORT CNO' S RECOMMENDATION FOR LOAN OF TWO SHIPS.
SEELYE

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973TUNIS01931
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730438/aaaaiarv.tel
Line Count: 134
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 TUNIS 0867
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02-Aug-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <24-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971216
Subject: LOAN OF TWO SHIPS TO TUNISIA
TAGS: MASS, TS
To: AF
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON
CNO OPS 63 WASHDC
SECSTATE WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY
WASHDC ASD// SA// DSAA
Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005